
LEICESTER

East Midlands

Recent population changes

Leicester has a long history as a multicultural city, with significant inflows of migrants dating back to the 1970s. In recent years Leicester has experienced further and increasing diversification of its population profile and it is expected to become, in the next few years, the first major urban area in the UK with a non-white ethnic majority population. According to the Census, in 2001 Leicester had a population of 279,921, of which 39.5% non 'white British' and 23% non UK born. The main groups of people born abroad were Indians (24,677) and those born in South and Eastern Africa, many of whom are of Indian descent (the so-called "Ugandan and Kenyan Asians" who fled to the UK in the last 1960s and early 1970s, many of whom came to Leicester)

The current scenario took shape after 2001, when Leicester was designated an asylum seekers dispersal area. The main countries of origin of asylum seekers have been Somalia and Zimbabwe, followed by Turkey, India, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq. In 2006 there were 145 Somalis and 160 Zimbabwean receiving NASS support. In the last few years, however there has been a drop in the number of asylum seekers and NASS accommodation both nationally and locally (in Leicester the bed spaces have reduced to around 700). On the other hand, the Leicester Assist Report (2006) points out that decisions are now being given much faster: "Currently the Home Office is giving a return figure of 77% of asylum seekers having a final decision within 2 months. This means that up to 4 different people could occupy each bed space within the year". It is therefore anticipated that the number of new asylum seekers moving into NASS accommodation in Leicester will be around 1600 per year. Leicester is also the largest area outside London and Birmingham for the number of people receiving NASS subsistence only.

Parallel to the decrease of asylum seekers, Leicester has seen an increasing influx of economic migrants from Eastern Europe; in particular, after the EU enlargement of 2004, from Poland, but also from Lithuania and Slovakia. Leicester features also a significant migration of people of non-British background coming from other UK cities (in particular from other areas of dispersal where people could settle and integrate less easily) and an influx of Asian and African migrants from other European countries, particularly Somalis coming from the Netherlands and Sweden.

Leicester has often been described as the second best option for immigrants to the UK after London. It is a city offering many opportunities, with good economic conditions, convenience of location and, in the past, availability of cheap accommodation. More generally, Leicester is perceived as a welcoming city for new migrants, with well established multicultural communities and a positive sense of social cohesion. As observed in recent JRF research (Rhythms and Realities of Everyday Life), the city "shifted from an initial position of discouraging Ugandan Asians from settling in the 1970s to winning Beacon Status for their initiatives on promoting Racial Equality and for Community Cohesion in 2003-04". The centrality of family migration and the ability of groups of migrants to establish small family-based enterprises and community involvement emerge among the main reasons for this success. Local authorities and service providers often express a sense of pride in Leicester's reputation as a successful multicultural city, but there is also recognition

that maintaining this kind of asset needs everyday efforts and an ability to adapt to constant changes.

Statistics

Total population: 2001 (Census): 279,921; 2005 (Pop. Survey): 288,000

Non UK born (2001)

Total: 64,466 (23.03%)	
Top ten countries:	
India	24,677
South and Eastern Africa (1)	10,829
Kenya	6,842
Ireland	2,486
Pakistan	1,854
Caribbean and West Indies (3)	1,634
Central and Western Africa (4)	1,277
Bangladesh	1,051
Zimbabwe	913
Germany	893

Notes: (1) Other than Kenya, Somalia, South Africa, Zimbabwe; (3) Other than Jamaica; (4) Other than D.R.Congo, Nigeria, Sierra Leone

Source: Census 2001

Non 'white British' population: 2001 (Census): 110,465 (39.46%)

Registration for NINOs (national insurance numbers) from non British residents

2002/03	#	2005/06	#
Total:	3,820	Total:	7,620
Top ten countries:		Top ten countries:	
India	1,090	Poland	2,270
Portugal	360	India	1,780
Zimbabwe	270	Slovak Rep	440
Iraq	230	Portugal	230
Somalia	180	China Peoples Rep	180
Netherlands	120	Zimbabwe	170
Afghanistan	110	Netherlands	150
Pakistan	100	Nigeria	140
Philippines	100	Pakistan	140
Sri Lanka	90	Czech Rep	120

Number of refugee status granted in 2005: 154 (Source: Home Office)

Asylum seekers receiving NASS support (June 2006)

Dispersals	#	Subsistence only	#
Total:	680	Total:	215
Top 10 countries:		Top 10 countries	
Somalia	125	Zimbabwe	85
Zimbabwe	75	Somalia	20
Turkey	60	India	15
Afghanistan	55	Iraq	10
Sri Lanka	35	Romania	10
Iran	30	Serbia	10
Serbia & Mont.	30	Afghanistan	5
Pakistan	25	Burundi	5

Iraq	20	Belarus	5
Sudan	20	Cameroon	5

Top ten industries of employment

April 2001	#	%
D. Manufacturing	26,107	23.4
G. Wholesale and retail trade, repairs	20,894	18.7
N. Health and social work	12,999	11.6
K. Real estate, renting and business activities	10,132	9.1
M. Education	9,305	8.3
I. Transport, storage and communications	6,833	6.1
F. Construction	5,481	4.9
H. Hotels and restaurants	5,208	4.7
O. Other community, social and personal service activities	4,732	4.2
L. Public administration and defence, social security	4,543	4.1

Source: National Statistics 2001

Labour Market

Migrants are meeting the needs for unskilled workers in the Leicester labour market - particularly in sectors such as food preparation, warehousing and distribution – and in this sense they are not competing with local population for job opportunities. In the past the textile industry was also very important, but its role has now faded. Certain groups of migrant workers are concentrated in particular areas, e.g. Poles in the construction sector. EMDA (East Midlands Development Agency) is currently working on a research project on the economic contribution of migrants in the East Midlands: results due to be published in Spring 2007.

Within this generally positive scenario, some issues arise. Risks of labour insecurity and economic exploitation have been reported. Migrant builders, in particular, are often paid much less than their English colleagues and there have been several reported cases of migrant workers not getting the minimum wage.

Reportedly, new A8 economic migrants are competing with older migrants and refugees for job opportunities and on several occasions we were told that employers prefer to employ somebody with a clear work permit (or clearly no need for a permit) than, for example, somebody with refugee status. Likewise new migrants and established ethnic communities appear to compete to access socio-economic resources and services.

Local activities and developments

A number of projects and initiatives have been set up to address the needs of the continuously diversifying migrant population in Leicester. Some examples of good practices, as emerged from research, are:

- The UPSKILL project delivered by NIACE. aims to assist refugees and migrants in the East Midlands to overcome barriers associated with accessing employment commensurate with their skills and experience in four occupational areas: Accountancy; Construction; Health and Social Care; Business Administration. The project includes vocational trainings, ESOL courses, financial support and opportunities of work experience.

- The ASSIST Project, set up by the Leicester PCT, registers asylum seekers and provides immediate and necessary health care. The specialist team see people to identify health related problems and provide information on the network of voluntary sector organisations that exist to respond to the needs of individuals.
- The Northfields Project, launched in 1999 in response to what had been the problems of a traditional high crime area and mainly white area to help migrant families to settle in and, in the process, develop a sense of new social cohesion.
- Information and orientation activities carried out by the Red Cross, Refugee & Asylum Seekers Advice Project (RASAP), Toc H Centre.
- Many respondents pointed out the activities carried out by faith groups as a valuable resource and an example of social capital development for migrant communities. Reportedly, faith communities in Leicester operate mainly on the basis of needs, rather than faith/religion as such.
- Universities and colleges have developed considerable expertise in supporting overseas students to ensure they have the best experience possible.

Local Networks

In Leicester there is a very productive multi-agency coordination in the field of migrants and refugees. Many examples of joint working exist between public and voluntary sector bodies, including the work of forums (e.g. Voluntary Sector Forum, Refugee Forum) that have been set-up to help meet the needs of particular groups of new arrivals, such as refugees and asylum seekers. The Multi Agency Forum (MAF) is currently the main body to facilitate information sharing between agencies involved with asylum seekers and refugees in Leicester.

Many local organisations and umbrellas are also engaged in national and regional networks, with positive example of exchange of best practices, consultation and exchange of information. The major example is EMCARS (East Midlands Consortium for Asylum and Refugee Support), a non-statutory strategic regional partnership body established in March 2000 to coordinate activities to support asylum seekers in the region.

However, as emerged in the Race Asylum and Nationality Conference 2005, the networking among BME organisations is not enough yet strong enough. Most funding now goes through partnerships but many BME and, particularly, Refugee Community Organisations do not have enough 'clout' to influence funders and are not represented on decision-making and funding forums.

New Arrivals Strategy

Within this rich system of local networking, Leicester Council, in consultation with other local agencies, has recently developed a New Arrivals Strategy. The Strategy is aimed at people and organisations that come into contact with new arrivals (including refugees and asylum seekers), and therefore contribute to the success of their integration in Leicester. The main objectives of the New Arrivals Strategies are to:

- Influence government policy so that the context for successful integration of new arrivals is more favourable.
- Establish effective co-ordination between national and local level.
- Achieve effective local service planning to improve attention to New Arrivals' needs.
- Significantly improve the amount and quality of data on new arrival communities. Increase the quality and effectiveness of service delivery to new arrivals.
- Improve public awareness and public image of new arrival communities.
- Actively work to address the problem of destitution of those who have come through the asylum process.

An Action Plan has been developed to deliver this New Arrivals Strategy. The Action Plan is due to be reviewed in April 2007, and at 6-monthly intervals thereafter.

In June 2006 the Leicester Partnership Executive Board approved a proposal for the establishment of a New Arrivals Network of Services (NANOS). The NANOS will contribute to some of the objectives within the New Arrivals Strategies, e.g. improve the coordination between national, regional and local level, increase the effectiveness of local service planning and quality of service delivery. After final approval within the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund Programme, NANOS would be subject to the City Council's procurement rules in order to determine a provider of the service.

Needs, gaps and priorities

Destitution. Destitution and homelessness amongst asylum seekers and refugees is a growing issue in Leicester. In 2006 LVSF (Leicester Voluntary Sector Forum) commissioned a Report on Destitute Asylum Seekers and Refugees entitled "What am I living for?". The results revealed that during the period of the survey 308 asylum seekers reported that they were destitute. This data represents a 212% increase in the 32 people sleeping rough identified in a similar survey in 2005. Of the 308, 100 reported that they has slept rough at least once in locations such as underpasses, the train station and the market. 200 reported that they slept on the floors of friends' houses. 8 reported that they lived in private sector accommodation. For many asylum seekers destitution is a long term problem: the survey revealed that 120 had been destitute for more that 1 year and another 100 for a period between 6 months and 1 year. The report considers the main reasons for this high level of destitution among asylum seekers and refugees, most notably government policy and lack of access to good legal support. Refugee Action has also published a national report, "The Destitution Trap" which includes material based on interviews with many destitute asylum seekers in Leicester.

Lack of legal support. Stakeholders report a general lack of free legal support and recommend a better provision of solicitors, legal advice and interpreters for asylum seekers. The LVSF report on destitution recommended that encouragement should be given to legal firms, including the Law Centre and any other not-for-profit legal advice agency, to take any steps possible to further enable asylum seekers to gain access to due process under the law.

Housing. When the refugee inflows started there was a lot of housing available in Leicester, but over the years needs have dramatically increased and there is now fierce competition even in areas where some time ago nobody wanted to live. Appropriate social housing can be a problem for communities like the Somalis, where very large families are common.

Need for vocational training. There is a general lack of training opportunities for migrants and refugees. There is a particular need to develop vocational training and advanced English courses (such as work-related ESOL classes). Training provision should be more flexible, making available part time courses and evening classes. Employers should work more closely with the council and local organisations to facilitate access to work opportunities for migrants and refugees. Also courses to prepare for the citizenship test should be set up.

Documents

- **New Arrivals Strategy**, Leicester Partnership, November 2006
- Leicester Partnership, **New Arrivals Strategy & Action Plan – Implementation Progress**, Refugee and Asylum Seekers Multi-Agency Forum, 12th December 2006, Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership, 14th December 2006
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(<http://emcars.rol.co.uk/pp/gold/viewGold.asp?IDType=Page&ID=13656>)
- **Safer Together. Final Report 2005**. Report from the 'Regional Conference for Better Integration of Asylum Seeking and Refugee Children in East Midlands Schools, EMCARS, Home Office, Government Office for the East Midlands
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- **The Assist Service, 2nd Annual Report**, Eastern Leicester PCT, Leicester City West PCT, June 2006
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- Pandya, R., Shehu, G., Natha, Z., Daja, K. (2005), **Routz Project: Exploring Drug and Alcohol use and related needs of Refugees and Asylum Seeking Communities within the Northwest of Leicestershire**, A study commissioned by the Department of Health, managed and supported by the Centre for Ethnicity and Health (University of Central Lancashire), delivered by 'Turning Point'.
- **EMCARS Mythbuster Leaflet**, EMCARS (East Midlands Consortium for Asylum and Refugee Support), 2006
- **The Destitution Trap** Refugee Action 2006